



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 9, 2022

Ms. Stephanie Berry
Assistant City Attorney
City of Denton
215 East McKinney
Denton, Texas 76201

OR2022-16559

Dear Ms. Berry:

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# 952833 (ORR# R000421).

The City of Denton (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. The city claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exceptions and reviewed the submitted information.

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 the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in the *Industrial Foundation* decision. *Id.* at 683. Generally, only highly intimate information that implicates the privacy of an individual is withheld. However, in certain instances, where it is demonstrated the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved, as well as the nature of certain incidents, the entirety of the information must be withheld to protect the individual's privacy. Withholding only the identity of the victim at issue or certain details of the submitted information from this

requestor would not preserve the common-law right of privacy of the individual at issue. Accordingly, to protect the privacy of the victim, the city must generally withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

However, the requestor may represent the victim. Section 552.023 of the Government Code provides a governmental body may not deny access to a person or a person's representative to whom the information relates on the grounds that the information is considered confidential under privacy principles. Gov't Code § 552.023(a); *see* Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning herself). Thus, if the requestor represents the victim, then the requestor has a right of access to this individual's private information pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code, and the city may not withhold information pertaining to the individual under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate the information at issue relates to a criminal investigation that has concluded in a final result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(2), .301(e)(1)(A). The city states the submitted information pertains to a case that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Therefore, we agree section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to this information.

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 Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976), and includes a detailed description of the offense. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.

In summary, if the requestor does not represent the victim at issue, then the city must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. If the requestor represents the victim, then the city must release the basic information, but may withhold the remaining information 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,

James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/jxd

Ref: ID# 952833

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)