



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 13, 2022

Ms. Stacie S. White
Counsel for the Town of Flower Mound
Taylor Olson Adkins Sralla Elam, L.L.P.
6000 Western Place, Suite 200
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

OR2022-16947

Dear Ms. White:

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# 952920.

The Flower Mound Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for video recordings related to a specified arrest. The department states it is withholding social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147(b) of the Government Code.¹ The department also states it is withholding certain information pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).² The department claims 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 the department claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the submitted information includes police officers' body worn camera recordings. Body worn cameras are subject to chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code. Chapter 1701 provides the procedures a requestor must follow when seeking a body worn camera recording. Section 1701.661 provides, in relevant part, the following:

¹ Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

² Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain information without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

(a) A member of the public is required to provide the following information when submitting a written request to a law enforcement agency for information recorded by a body worn camera:

- (1) the date and approximate time of the recording;
- (2) the specific location where the recording occurred; and
- (3) the name of one or more persons known to be a subject of the recording.

Occ. Code § 1701.661(a). The department asserts the requestor does not give the requisite information under section 1701.661(a). Therefore, the department argues the requestor did not properly request the body worn camera recording at issue pursuant to chapter 1701. Upon review, we agree the requestor does not provide the requisite information under section 1701.661(a) for some of the submitted body worn camera recordings. As the body worn camera recordings at issue were not properly requested pursuant to chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code, our ruling does not reach this information and it need not be released. However, pursuant to section 1701.661(b), a “failure to provide all the information required by [s]ubsection (a) to be part of a request for recorded information does not preclude the requestor from making a future request for the same recorded information.” *Id.* § 1701.661(b). Further, we note the instant request includes the information required by section 1701.661(a) with respect to the remaining body worn camera recordings. *Id.* Accordingly, we find the requestor properly requested the remaining body worn camera recordings at issue and we will address the department’s argument against their disclosure, as well as the remaining video recordings.

We note the responsive video recordings include information that is subject to article 2.1396 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 2.1396 provides:

A person stopped or arrested on suspicion of an offense under Section 49.04, 49.045, 49.07, or 49.08, Penal Code, is entitled to receive from a law enforcement agency employing the peace officer who made the stop or arrest a copy of any video made by or at the direction of the officer that contains footage of:

- (1) the stop;
- (2) the arrest;
- (3) the conduct of the person stopped during any interaction with the officer, including during the administration of a field sobriety test;
or
- (4) a procedure in which a specimen of the person’s breath or blood is taken.

Crim Proc. Code art 2.1396. Portions of the responsive video recordings, which were made by or at the direction of officers employed by the department, consist of footage of the conduct of an individual during an interaction with the officers after being arrested on suspicion of an offense under section 49.04 of the Penal Code. *See* Penal Code § 49.04 (person commits offense if person is intoxicated while operating motor vehicle in public place). The requestor states he represents the individual at issue. Therefore, the requestor is generally entitled to receive a copy of those portions of this information pursuant to article 2.1396 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Although the department asserts section 552.108 of the Government Code to withhold this information, we note a statutory right of access prevails over the Act's general exceptions to public disclosure. *See, e.g.,* Open Records Decision Nos. 613 at 4 (1993) (exceptions in Act cannot impinge on statutory right of access to information), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exception to disclosure under the Act). Because section 552.108 is a general exception under the Act, the requestor's statutory right of access under article 2.1396 prevails. Therefore, the department may not withhold the portions of the video recordings at issue under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Additionally, the department asserts some of the information at issue is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. However, a statutory right of access prevails over the common-law. *Collins v. Tex Mall, L.P.*, 297 S.W.3d 409, 415 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2009, no pet.) (statutory provision controls and preempts common law only when statute directly conflicts with common law principle); *CenterPoint Energy Houston Elec. LLC v. Harris County Toll Rd. Auth.*, 436 F.3d 541, 544 (5th Cir. 2006) (common law controls only where there is no conflicting or controlling statutory law). Therefore, the department may not withhold any portion of the information at issue under section 552.101 in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.

The department also claims section 552.130 of the Government Code for some of the information at issue. Section 552.130 provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a). As previously noted, a statutory right of access generally prevails over the Act's general exceptions to disclosure. *See* ORDs 613 at 4, 451. However, because section 552.130 has its own access provisions, we find section 552.130 is not a general exception under the Act. Consequently, we must address the conflict between the confidentiality provided under section 552.130 and the right of access provided under article 2.1396 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Where information falls within both a general and a specific provision of law, the specific provision prevails over the general, unless the general provision was enacted later and there is clear evidence that the legislature intended the general provision to prevail. *See Horizon/CMS Healthcare Corp. v. Auld*, 34 S.W.3d 887, 901 (Tex. 2000) ("more specific statute controls over the more general"); *Cuellar v. State*, 521 S.W.2d 211 (Tex. Crim. App. 1975) (under well-established rule of statutory construction, specific statutory provisions prevail over general ones). Section 552.130 generally excepts motor vehicle record information maintained in any context, while article 2.1396 specifically provides access to certain video footage pertaining

to certain intoxication offense arrests. Therefore, we find the access provided under article 2.1396 is more specific than the general confidentiality provided under section 552.130. Additionally, we note article 2.1396 is the later-enacted statute. *See* Gov't Code § 311.025(a) (if statutes enacted at different sessions of legislature are irreconcilable, statute latest in enactment prevails). Thus, we conclude the requestor's access under article 2.1396 prevails over the confidentiality of section 552.130. Therefore, with respect to the portions of the responsive video recordings to which the requestor has a right of access under article 2.1396, the department may not withhold any portion of the video recordings at issue under section 552.130. Accordingly, pursuant to article 2.1396 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the department must release the portions of the responsive video recordings that depict the stop, the arrest, the conduct of the requestor's client, or a procedure in which a specimen of the requestor's client's blood or breath is taken. However, we will address the department's arguments against disclosure of remaining responsive 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). The department states the submitted 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, the department may withhold the remaining responsive information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary, the submitted body worn camera recordings that were not properly requested pursuant to chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code need not be released. The department must release the portions of the responsive video recordings that depict the stop, the arrest, the conduct of the requestor's client, or a procedure in which a specimen of the requestor's client's blood or breath is taken, pursuant to article 2.1396 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The department 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,

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/mo

Ref: ID# 952920

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)