



October 12, 2000

Mr. Les Romo
Counselor and Attorney at Law
307 Shannon Lane
Georgetown, Texas 78628

OR2000-3972

Dear Mr. Romo:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 140312.

The City of Liberty Hill (the "city"), which you represent, received two requests for copies of all legal services invoices received by the city from your law firm. You claim that two invoices, dated June 15, 2000 and July 13, 2000, are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

The submitted information are attorney fee bills. Section 552.022(a)(16) of the Government Code provides that "information that is in a bill for attorney's fees and is not privileged under the attorney-client privilege" is public information and is not excepted from required disclosure. Attorney fee bills may be excepted only if expressly made confidential or if excepted under the attorney-client privilege. Section 552.103 does not render the requested information confidential. *See Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469, 475-76 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (litigation exception discretionary; governmental body may waive section 552.103 exception). Therefore, you may not withhold the information under section 552.103.

Next, we address whether the attorney-client privilege applies to the requested information. Section 552.107(1) excepts information from disclosure if

it is information that the attorney general or an attorney of a political subdivision is prohibited from disclosing because of a duty to the client under the Texas Rules of Civil Evidence, the Texas Rules of Criminal Evidence, or the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.

Gov't Code § 552.107(1). In Open Records Decision No. 574 (1990), this office concluded that section 552.107 excepts from public disclosure only "privileged information," that is, information that reflects either confidential communications from the client to the attorney or the attorney's legal advice or opinions; it does not apply to all client information held by a governmental body's attorney. *Id.* at 5, 7. Section 552.107(1) does not protect purely factual information that does not reveal a client confidence. *Id.* at 7. We conclude that the submitted information does not reveal confidential client communications or contain an attorney's legal advice or opinions. Therefore, the information is not excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.107(1). The information must be released to the requestors.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

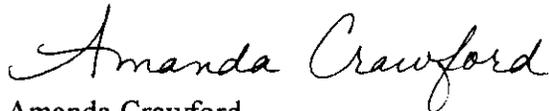
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Amanda Crawford
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AEC/er

Ref: ID# 140312

Encl: Submitted documents

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