



December 7, 2000

Ms. Sandra M. Zimmerman
Assistant City Attorney
City of Austin-Law Department
P.O. Box 1546
Austin, Texas 78767-1546

OR2000-4622

Dear Ms. Zimmerman:

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# 141950.

The City of Austin (the "city") received a request for information related to a land use proposal referenced in Ordinance No 000817-92. You claim that responsive attorney-client communications are excepted from disclosure under the attorney-client privilege aspect of section 552.107 of the Government Code. You do not assert an exception for, or submit for our review, any other responsive information. We assume that all other responsive information has been released. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.107(1) excepts from public disclosure "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 Evidence, the Texas Rules of Criminal Evidence, or the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct." Gov't Code § 552.107(1). This is the proper exception to raise for information that is protected by the attorney-client privilege. Open Records Decision No. 574 (1990). While section 552.107 appears to apply to information within rule 1.05 of the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, this office determined that this rule cannot be applied as broadly as written to information in the possession of an attorney for a governmental body. Open Records Decision No. 574 (1990). Section 552.107(1) was found to protect only the attorney's communication of legal advice or opinion to the client and communications from a client to an attorney where those communications are made in confidence and in furtherance of the attorney rendering professional legal service to the governmental body. *Id* at 5. From our review of the submitted materials we conclude that this information either reveals client communications made to an attorney in furtherance of the attorney's rendering of professional legal service to the city or is the advice or opinion of such an attorney. The information may therefore be withheld under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code.

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).

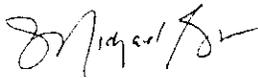
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following 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 Hadassah Schloss at 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,



Michael Jay Burns
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MJB/er

Ref: ID# 141950

Encl: Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Jeremy Bailey
600 West 26th Street, Apt. H269
Austin, Texas 78705
(w/o enclosures)