



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 28, 2005

Ms. Ashley D. Fourn
Assistant District Attorney
Tarrant County
401 West Belknap
Fort Worth, Texas 76196-0201

OR2005-01722

Dear Ms. Fourn:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 222040.

The Tarrant County District Attorney's Office (the "D.A.'s office") received a request for the Rules and Regulations Manual of the sheriff's department, the American Jail Association report concerning the medical care received by county jail inmates, and a draft copy of the report. The D.A.'s office has released all but the draft report, which it claims is protected under section 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.111 excepts from disclosure "an interagency or intraagency memorandum or letter that would not be available by law to a party in litigation with the agency." In Open Records Decision No. 615 (1993), this office reexamined the predecessor to the section 552.111 exception in light of the decision in *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ), and held that section 552.111 excepts only those internal communications consisting of advice, recommendations, opinions, and other material reflecting the policymaking processes of the governmental body. *City of Garland v. Dallas Morning News*, 22 S.W.3d 351, 364 (Tex. 2000); *Arlington Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Tex. Attorney Gen.*, 37 S.W.3d 152, 160 (Tex. App.—Austin 2001, no pet.). Section 552.111 does not, however, except from disclosure purely factual information that is severable from the opinion portions of internal memoranda. *Arlington Indep. Sch. Dist.* 37 S.W.3d at 160; ORD 615 at 4-5. The preliminary draft of a policymaking document that has

been released or is intended for release in final form is excepted from disclosure in its entirety under section 552.111 because such a draft necessarily represents the advice, recommendations, or opinions of the drafter as to the form and content of the final document. Open Records Decision No. 559 at 2 (1990).

The D.A.'s office states that the American Jail Association is an outside consultant "hired to perform a review of inmate health care in the Tarrant County Jail." Section 552.111 encompasses information created for governmental body by an outside consultant acting at the governmental body's request and performing a task that is within governmental body's authority. See Open Records Decision No. 631 at 2 (1995). Having reviewed the submitted draft report, we agree it pertains to a policymaking matter. Thus, we conclude the D.A.'s office may withhold the draft report under section 552.111.

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. 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 Texas Building and Procurement 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. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,



Yen-Ha Le
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

YHL/sdk

Ref: ID# 222040

Enc. Submitted document

c: Mr. William D. Mount, Jr.
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(w/o enclosure)