



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 13, 2005

Ms. Julie Y. Fort
Abernathy Roeder Boyd Joplin P.C.
P.O. Box 1210
McKinney, Texas 75070-1210

OR2005-06203

Dear Ms. Fort:

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# 227967.

The City of Wylie (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for (1) any studies done by the police and fire department on staffing needs and (2) a third-party study of police, fire, and other staffing needs. You ask this office to determine that the submitted information is not responsive to the request. You also claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments and have reviewed the information you submitted.

As a preliminary matter, we address your request for a determination that the submitted information is not responsive to this request for information. You ask this office to "determine that [the city] is not required to provide the [submitted documents] because they are not responsive to [the request]." You also represent to this office, however, that two of the submitted documents are responsive to the first part of the request and that the third document "will be responsive to the second part of the [request, but] is incomplete and is still a draft." We note that the Act does not require a governmental body to disclose information that did not exist at the time that the request was received, nor does the Act require a governmental body to prepare new information in response to a request. *See Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Attorney General Opinion H-90 (1973); Open Records Decision Nos. 452 at 2-3 (1986), 342 at 3 (1982), 87 (1975); *see also* Open Records Decision Nos. 572 at 1

(1990), 555 at 1-2 (1990), 416 at 5 (1984). However, a governmental body must make a good-faith effort to relate a request to responsive information that it maintains. *See* Open Records Decision No. 561 at 8 (1990). Based on your representations and our review of the submitted information, we find that the city has made a good-faith effort to relate this request to responsive information that the city maintains. Accordingly, we will address your arguments against disclosure of the submitted information.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides in relevant part:

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The city has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that section 552.103 is applicable to the information that it seeks to withhold. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date of the city's receipt of this request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to the pending or anticipated litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). The city must meet both elements of this test in order for information to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103.

To establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated, a governmental body must provide this office with "concrete evidence showing that the claim that litigation may ensue is more than mere conjecture." *See* Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986). Whether litigation is reasonably anticipated must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *Id.* Concrete evidence to support a claim that litigation is reasonably anticipated may include, for example, the governmental body's receipt of a letter containing a specific threat to sue the governmental body from an attorney for a potential opposing party. *See* Open Records Decision No. 555 (1990); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 518 at 5 (1989) (litigation must be "realistically contemplated"). On the other hand, this office has determined that if an individual publicly threatens to bring suit against a governmental body but does not actually take objective steps

toward filing suit, litigation is not reasonably anticipated. *See* Open Records Decision No. 331 (1982). Further, the fact that a potential opposing party has hired an attorney who makes a request for information does not establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated. *See* Open Records Decision No. 361 (1983).

Although you indicate that no lawsuit had been filed against the city at the time of its receipt of this request for information, you assert that the submitted information relates to anticipated litigation. In support of this assertion, you have provided a copy of a letter received by the city prior to this request for information in which the requestor expresses intent to file a lawsuit against several prospective defendants, including the city, in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division. You also have submitted a copy of the proposed complaint that accompanied that letter. The complaint alleges that the potential defendants violated the Fair Housing Act and other provisions of federal and state law in connection with plans for low-income housing development in the city. Based on your representations, the proposed complaint, and the totality of the circumstances, we find that the city has demonstrated that it reasonably anticipated litigation on the date of its receipt of this request for information. However, the city has not explained, nor can we discern, how the submitted information relates to the anticipated litigation and the potential plaintiffs' claims under the Fair Housing Act and other federal and state law as alleged in the proposed complaint. Because the city has not demonstrated how the submitted information relates to the anticipated litigation, we conclude that the information is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103. Because you make no other arguments against disclosure and the information is not otherwise confidential by law, the city must release the submitted information to the requestor.

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

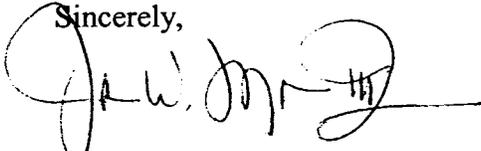
will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.W. Morris III', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/sdk

Ref: ID# 227967

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Robert H. Sherman
NuRock Development West
700 East Sandy Lake Road Suite 146
Coppell, Texas 75019
(w/o enclosures)