



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 28, 2010

Ms. Heather Silver
Assistant City Attorney
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla Street, Room 7DN
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2010-14721

Dear Ms. Silver:

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# 394923.

The City of Dallas (the "city") received a request for the following information pertaining to a specified petition: the number of validated signatures personally validated by the city and "details of who reviewed how many signatures, when, at what cost, and using what standard for verification." You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We have also received and considered comments from the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides as follows:

- (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 state or a political subdivision, as a consequence 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). A governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that 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). A governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a).

You state, and provide documentation demonstrating, that prior to the city's receipt of this request, a petition for writ of mandamus styled *In re Marcus Wood, the Kirkwood Temple, the African-American Pastors Coalition, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Dallas, the Mount Tabor Baptist Church and the Lifeway Church*, Case No. 05-10-00805-CV, was filed and is currently pending in the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Judicial District of Texas at Dallas. You further state the submitted information is related to the pending litigation because it directly pertains to the claims in the lawsuit. Accordingly, we find litigation was pending when the city received this request for information and the information at issue relates to the pending litigation. Therefore, section 552.103 is generally applicable to the submitted information.

We note once the information at issue has been obtained by all parties to the pending litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to the information. See Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). Accordingly, the city may only withhold the submitted information that the opposing parties to the litigation have not seen or had access to under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We note that the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has been concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

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 http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free,

at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Luttrall".

Jennifer Luttrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/dls

Ref: ID# 394923

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)