



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

June 28, 2011

Mr. Hal C. Hawes  
Legal Advisor  
Williamson County  
710 Main Street, Suite 200  
Georgetown, Texas 78626

OR2011-09177

Dear Mr. Mawes:

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# 422380.

Williamson County (the "county") received a request for (1) all communications between a named individual and members of the Williamson County Commissioners Court during a specified time period; (2) all communications involving the named individual pertaining to the requestor during a specified time period; (3) the requestor's personnel file; (4) all information regarding the county's dress code policy; (5) all information concerning a person requesting an investigation of the requestor; and (6) all information pertaining to an investigation of the requestor, including the outcome of or evidence associated with such an investigation. You state that the requestor agreed to allow the county to redact certain information from the responsive documents. You also state that the county has made the information responsive to items 3 through 6 of the request available to the requestor. You claim that the submitted information you have marked is excepted from disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.107(1) of the Government Code protects information that comes within the attorney-client privilege. When asserting the attorney-client privilege, a governmental body has the burden of providing the necessary facts to demonstrate the elements of the privilege in order to withhold the information at issue. Open Records Decision No. 676 at 6-7 (2002).

First, a governmental body must demonstrate that the information constitutes or documents a communication. *Id.* at 7. Second, the communication must have been made “for the purpose of facilitating the rendition of professional legal services” to the client governmental body. TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). The privilege does not apply when an attorney or representative is involved in some capacity other than that of providing or facilitating professional legal services to the client governmental body. *In re Tex. Farmers Ins. Exch.*, 990 S.W.2d 337, 340 (Tex. App.—Texarkana 1999, orig. proceeding) (attorney-client privilege does not apply if attorney acting in a capacity other than that of attorney). Third, the privilege applies only to communications between or among clients, client representatives, lawyers, and lawyer representatives. *See* TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). Thus, a governmental body must inform this office of the identities and capacities of the individuals to whom each communication at issue has been made. Lastly, the attorney-client privilege applies only to a confidential communication, meaning it was “not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those to whom disclosure is made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client or those reasonably necessary for the transmission of the communication.” *Id.* 503(a)(5). Whether a communication meets this definition depends on the intent of the parties involved at the time the information was communicated. *Osborne v. Johnson*, 954 S.W.2d 180, 184 (Tex. App.—Waco 1997, no pet.). Moreover, because the client may elect to waive the privilege at any time, a governmental body must explain that the confidentiality of a communication has been maintained. Section 552.107(1) generally excepts an entire communication that is demonstrated to be protected by the attorney-client privilege unless otherwise waived by the governmental body. *See Huie v. DeShazo*, 922 S.W.2d 920, 923 (Tex. 1996) (privilege extends to entire communication, including facts contained therein).

You state that the communications you have marked were made for the purpose of providing legal advice to the county. You inform us that the communications at issue were intended to be and have remained confidential. You have identified the parties to the communications. Based on your representations and our review, we agree that the information you have marked constitutes privileged attorney-client communications. Accordingly, the county may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released to the requestor.

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](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 black ink, appearing to read "Chris Sterner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher D. Sterner  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CDSA/bs

Ref: ID# 422380

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)