



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

July 30, 2012

Ms. Emily E. Helm  
General Counsel  
Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission  
P.O. Box 13127  
Austin, Texas 78711-3127

OR2012-11865

Dear Ms. Helm:

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# 465816.

The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (the "commission") received a request for disciplinary information and internal affairs reports involving four named individuals. You inform us the commission has no responsive information regarding three of the individuals.<sup>1</sup> You state the commission has released some of the requested information.<sup>2</sup> You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the information you submitted.

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<sup>1</sup>We note the Act does not require a governmental body to release information that did not exist when it received a request or create responsive information. See *Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dism'd); Open Records Decision Nos. 605 at 2 (1992), 555 at 1 (1990), 452 at 3 (1986), 362 at 2 (1983).

<sup>2</sup>You indicate the commission redacted portions of this information pursuant to sections 552.117(a)(2) and 552.147 of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(2) excepts from disclosure certain personal information related to a peace officer, as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. See § Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2); Open Records Decision Nos. 670 at 6 (2001) (granting previous determination under statutory predecessor), 673 at 7-8 (2001) (listing elements of second type of previous determination under Gov't Code § 552.301(a)). Section 552.147(b) authorizes a governmental body to withhold a living individual's social security number without requesting a decision under the Act.

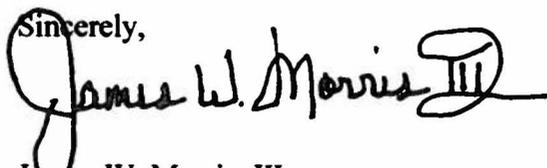
Section 552.107(1) of the Government Code protects information that comes within the attorney-client privilege. When asserting the attorney-client privilege, a governmental body has the burden of providing the necessary facts to demonstrate the elements of the privilege in order to withhold the information at issue. *See* 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. *See* 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. *See 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 capacity other than that of attorney). Governmental attorneys often act in capacities other than that of professional legal counsel, such as administrators, investigators, or managers. Thus, the mere fact that a communication involves an attorney for the government does not demonstrate this element. Third, the privilege applies only to communications between or among clients, client representatives, lawyers, and lawyer representatives. *See* TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1)(A)-(E). 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, *id.* 503(b)(1), 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. *See Osborne v. Johnson*, 954 S.W.2d 180, 184 (Tex. App.—Waco 1997, orig. proceeding). 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 explain the submitted information consists of attorney-client communications made in connection with the rendition of professional legal services to the commission. You have identified the parties to the communications. You state the communications were intended to be and remain confidential. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the commission may withhold the submitted information under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code.

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,  


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

JWM/bhf

Ref: ID# 465816

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)