



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 23, 2012

Mr. David D. Menchaca  
Assistant General Counsel  
Open Records Section  
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts  
P.O. Box 13528  
Austin, Texas 78711-3528

OR2012-13413

Dear Mr. Menchaca:

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# 462959 (CPA# 8342330084).

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (the "comptroller's office") received a request for comments and documents related to a specific proposed rule amendment. You state the comptroller's office will release some of the information but will redact e-mail addresses pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).<sup>1</sup> You claim portions of the requested information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Open Records Decision No. 684 serves as a previous determination to all governmental bodies permitting them to withhold certain categories of information, including an e-mail address of a member of the public under section 552.137 of the Government Code, without the necessity of seeking a decision from this office.

<sup>2</sup>We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than those submitted to this office.

Section 552.111 of the Government Code 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.” Gov’t Code § 552.111. Section 552.111 encompasses the deliberative process privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 615 at 2 (1993). The purpose of this exception is to protect advice, opinion, and recommendation in the decisional process and to encourage open and frank discussion in the deliberative process. *See Austin v. City of San Antonio*, 630 S.W.2d 391, 394 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 1982, orig. proceeding); Open Records Decision No. 538 at 1–2 (1990).

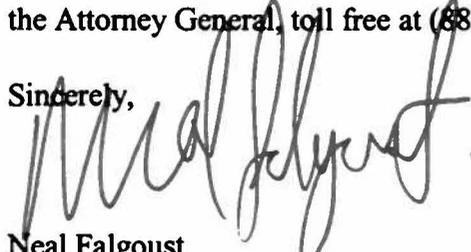
In Open Records Decision No. 615, this office re-examined the statutory predecessor to section 552.111 in light of the decision in *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, orig. proceeding). We determined section 552.111 excepts from disclosure only those internal communications that consist of advice, opinions, recommendations, and other material reflecting the policymaking processes of the governmental body. *See* ORD 615 at 5. A governmental body’s policymaking functions do not encompass routine internal administrative or personnel matters, and disclosure of information about such matters will not inhibit free discussion of policy issues among agency personnel. *Id.*; *see also City of Garland v. Dallas Morning News*, 22 S.W.3d 351 (Tex. 2000) (section 552.111 not applicable to personnel-related communications that did not involve policymaking). A governmental body’s policymaking functions do include administrative and personnel matters of broad scope that affect the governmental body’s policy mission. *See* Open Records Decision No. 631 at 3 (1995). Further, section 552.111 does not protect facts and written observations of facts and events that are severable from advice, opinions, and recommendations. *Arlington Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Tex. Attorney Gen.*, 37 S.W.3d 152 (Tex. App.—Austin 2001, no pet.); *see* ORD 615 at 5. But if factual information is so inextricably intertwined with material involving advice, opinion, or recommendation as to make severance of the factual data impractical, the factual information also may be withheld under section 552.111. *See* Open Records Decision No. 313 at 3 (1982). You state the information you seek to withhold consists of advice, opinions, and recommendations communicated between employees of the comptroller’s office concerning an administrative rule related to the state’s franchise tax. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the comptroller’s office may generally withhold the information you have marked under section 552.111 of the Government Code. However, we find the information we have marked for release consists of factual information that may not be withheld under section 552.111 of the Government Code. As you raise no other exceptions, the remaining information must be released.

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,



Neal Falgoust  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

NF/ag

Ref: ID# 462959

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)