



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 19, 2013

Mr. Gary B. Lawson
Counsel for the Dallas Police & Fire Pension System
Strasburger & Price, L.L.P.
901 Main Street, Suite 4400
Dallas, Texas 75202-3794

OR2013-20187

Dear Mr. Lawson:

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# 506287.

The Dallas Police and Fire Pension System (the "system"), which you represent, received a request for communications sent to or from a named individual during a specified time period pertaining to a specified issue. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.107 and 552.111 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered your arguments 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. *See* ORD 676 at 6-7. First, a governmental body must demonstrate 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.

¹We note the proper exceptions to raise when asserting the attorney-client privilege and work product privilege for information not subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code are sections 552.107 and 552.111 of the Government Code, respectively. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 676 at 1-2 (2002), 677 (2002).

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, lawyer representatives, and a lawyer representing another party in a pending action and concerning a matter of common interest therein. *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, *id.*, 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 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 claim the submitted information is protected by section 552.107(1) of the Government Code. You state the information at issue consists of communications involving system employees, attorneys, and trustees, as well as the system’s outside legal counsel. You state the communications were made in confidence for the purpose of facilitating the rendition of professional legal services to the system and that these communications have remained confidential. Based on your representations and our review, we find you have demonstrated the applicability of the attorney-client privilege to the information at issue. Thus, the system may withhold the submitted information under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code.²

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.

²As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Cynthia G. Tynan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CGT/akg

Ref: ID# 506287

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)