



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 5, 2016

Ms. Leah Hayes  
Counsel for City of Jersey Village  
Olson & Olson, L.L.P.  
2727 Allen Parkway, Suite 600  
Houston, Texas 77019-2133

OR2016-22372

Dear Ms. Hayes:

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# 629495 (CoJV Ref: JV16-004 / PIR 187).

The City of Jersey Village (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for several categories of information pertaining to specified meetings, specified communications, specified locations, specified lists, and a specified map. You state the city has released some information to the requestor. You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.107, and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the submitted information contains draft minutes of a public meeting. The minutes of a governmental body's public meetings are specifically made public under provisions of the Open Meetings Act (the "OMA"), chapter 551 of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code* § 551.022 (minutes and tape recordings of open meeting are public records and shall be available for public inspection and copying on request to governmental body's chief administrative officer or officer's designee). In this instance, the submitted Council Action Reports are draft minutes. We note the minutes of a public meeting of a governmental body are public records when entered, are public in whatever form they exist,

and public access may not be delayed until formal approval is obtained. Open Records Decision No. 225 (1979). Although you seek to withhold this information under section 552.111 of the Government Code, as a general rule, the exceptions to disclosure found in the Act do not apply to information that other statutes make public. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 623 at 3 (1994), 525 at 3 (1989). Accordingly, the city must release the information we have marked pursuant to the OMA.

Next, we note some of the remaining information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a) provides, in relevant part:

(a) [T]he following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure unless made confidential under this chapter or other law:

...

(3) information in an account, voucher, or contract relating to the receipt or expenditure of public or other funds by a governmental body; [and]

...

(17) information that is also contained in a public court record[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(3), (17). The remaining information contains information in an account, contract, or voucher relating to the receipt or expenditure of funds by the city that is subject to section 552.022(a)(3) and court-filed documents that are subject to section 552.022(a)(17). This information must be released unless it is made confidential under the Act or other law. *See id.* § 552.022(a)(3), (17). You seek to withhold the information subject to section 552.022 under section 552.107 of the Government Code. However, section 552.107 is discretionary in nature and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 676 at 10-11 (2002) (attorney-client privilege under Gov't Code § 552.107(1) may be waived); *see also* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions). Therefore, the information subject to section 552.022, which we have marked, may not be withheld under section 552.107 of the Government Code. However, the Texas Supreme Court has held the Texas Rules of Evidence are "other law" within the meaning of section 552.022. *See In re City of Georgetown*, 53 S.W.3d 328, 336 (Tex. 2001). Accordingly, we will address your claim of the attorney-client privilege under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence for the marked information subject to section 552.022. We will also consider your arguments under sections 552.101, 552.107, and 552.111 for the information not subject to section 552.022.

Rule 503(b)(1) provides:

A client has a privilege to refuse to disclose and to prevent any other person from disclosing confidential communications made to facilitate the rendition of professional legal services to the client:

(A) between the client or the client's representative and the client's lawyer or the lawyer's representative;

(B) between the client's lawyer and the lawyer's representative;

(C) by the client, the client's representative, the client's lawyer, or the lawyer's representative to a lawyer representing another party in a pending action or that lawyer's representative, if the communications concern a matter of common interest in the pending action;

(D) between the client's representatives or between the client and the client's representative; or

(E) among lawyers and their representatives representing the same client.

TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). A communication is "confidential" if not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those to whom disclosure is made to further the rendition of professional legal services to the client or reasonably necessary to transmit the communication. *Id.* 503(a)(5).

Accordingly, in order to withhold attorney-client privileged information from disclosure under rule 503, a governmental body must 1) show that the document is a communication transmitted between privileged parties or reveals a confidential communication; 2) identify the parties involved in the communication; and 3) show that the communication is confidential by explaining that it was not intended to be disclosed to third persons and that it was made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client. *See* ORD 676. Upon a demonstration of all three factors, the entire communication is confidential under 503 provided the client has not waived the privilege or the communication does not fall within the purview of the exceptions to the privilege enumerated in 503(d). *Huie v. DeShazo*, 922 S.W.2d 920, 923 (Tex. 1996) (privilege extends to entire communication, including facts contained therein); *In re Valero Energy Corp.*, 973 S.W.2d 453, 457 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1998, orig. proceeding) (privilege attaches to complete communication, including factual information).

You claim the information subject to section 552.022 consists of attachments to communications between attorneys for the city and city employees and officials in their

capacities as clients. You state these communications were made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the city. You state these communications were intended to be, and 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. Accordingly, the city may withhold the information subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence.

Section 552.107(1) of the Government Code protects information coming within the attorney-client privilege. *See* Gov't Code § 552.107(1). The elements of the privilege under section 552.107(1) are the same as those discussed above for rule 503. 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. ORD 676 at 6-7. 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*, 922 S.W.2d at 923.

You claim the information not subject to section 552.022 you marked is protected by section 552.107(1) of the Government Code. You state the information at issue consists of communications involving attorneys for the city and city employees and officials in their capacities as clients. You state these communications were made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the city. You state these communications were intended to be, and 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. Accordingly, the city may withhold the information not subject to section 552.022 you marked under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.111 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[a]n 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. This exception encompasses the deliberative process privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 615 at 2 (1993). The purpose of section 552.111 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, writ ref'd n.r.e.); 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, no writ). We determined section 552.111 excepts from disclosure only those internal communications that consist of advice, recommendations, opinions, and other material reflecting the policymaking processes

---

<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

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).

This office has also concluded a preliminary draft of a document that is intended for public release in its final form necessarily represents the drafter's advice, opinion, and recommendation with regard to the form and content of the final document, so as to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.111. *See* Open Records Decision No. 559 at 2 (1990) (applying statutory predecessor). Section 552.111 protects factual information in the draft that also will be included in the final version of the document. *See id.* at 2-3. Thus, section 552.111 encompasses the entire contents, including comments, underlining, deletions, and proofreading marks, of a preliminary draft of a policymaking document that will be released to the public in its final form. *See id.* at 2.

Section 552.111 can also encompass communications between a governmental body and a third party, including a consultant or other party with a privity of interest. *See* Open Records Decision No. 561 at 9 (1990) (section 552.111 encompasses communications with party with which governmental body has privity of interest or common deliberative process). For section 552.111 to apply, the governmental body must identify the third party and explain the nature of its relationship with the governmental body. Section 552.111 is not applicable to a communication between the governmental body and a third party unless the governmental body establishes it has a privity of interest or common deliberative process with the third party. *See* ORD 561.

You state a portion of the information at issue consists of discussions and notes by the city's legislative body. You further state these documents include drafts of agenda items. You explain this information is reflective of the deliberative process. Thus, you state the information at issue consists of advice, opinions, and recommendations of the city pertaining to its policymaking functions. However, you do not state whether the draft documents will be released to the public in their final forms. To the extent the city will release the draft

documents to the public in their final forms, the city may withhold them in their entireties under section 552.111 of the Government Code. However, if the city will not release the draft documents to the public in their final form, the city may not withhold them in their entireties under section 552.111. Nonetheless, we find some of the information at issue, which we have marked, consists of advice, opinions, or recommendations on the policymaking matters of the city. Thus, the city may withhold the marked information under section 552.111 of the Government Code. Upon review, however, we find the remaining information at issue is general administrative and purely factual information or does not pertain to policymaking. Further, some of the remaining information was received from an individual with whom you have not demonstrated the city shares a privity of interest or common deliberative process. Thus, we find you have failed to show the remaining information at issue consists of internal communications containing advice, opinions, or recommendations on the policymaking matters of the city. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the remaining information at issue under section 552.111 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). Upon review, we find you have not demonstrated any of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Thus, none of the remaining information may be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note some of the remaining information is subject to section 552.136 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup> Section 552.136 of the Government Code provides, “Notwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). We note check numbers are not access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. Accordingly, the city must withhold the routing and bank account numbers we have marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

---

<sup>2</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

In summary, the city must release the information we have marked pursuant to the OMA. The city may withhold the information subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code we have marked under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence. The city may withhold the information not subject to section 552.022 you marked under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code. To the extent the city will release the draft documents to the public in their final form, the city may withhold them in their entirety under section 552.111 of the Government Code. However, if the city will not release the draft documents to the public in their final form, the city may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.111 of the Government Code. The city must withhold the routing and bank account numbers we have marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The city must release the remaining information.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](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,



Gerald A. Arismendez  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

GAA/dls

Ref: ID# 629495

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)