OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL · STATE OF TEXAS
JOHN CORNYN

December 22, 1999

Mr. Phil Steven Kosub
Soules & Wallace
Attorneys at Law
Frost Bank Tower
100 West Houston Street, Suite 1500
San Antonio, Texas 78205-1457

OR99-3726

Dear Mr. Kosub:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 130672.

The City of Castle Hills (the "city") received a request for various information concerning Castle Hills First Baptist Church's application for a special use permit. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.106, 552.107 and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You assert that section 552.103 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the requested information. Section 552.103(a) reads as follows:

> (a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

A governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show the applicability of an exception in a particular situation. The test for establishing that section 552.103(a) applies is a two-prong showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *University of Tex.*

Law Sch. v. Texas Legal Found., 958 S.W.2d 479 (Tex. App.--Austin, 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210 (Tex. App.--Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 588 (1991). In this instance, you have made the requisite showing that the requested information relates to litigation for purposes of section 552.103(a).[1] The requested records therefore may be withheld from public disclosure.

We note that if the opposing party in the litigation has seen or had access to any of the information in these records, there is no section 552.103(a) interest in withholding that information from the requestor. Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). Furthermore, the agendas and minutes of an open meeting are public records. Gov't Code § 551.022. Furthermore, attorney fee bills may not be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103. Gov't Code § 552.022(16). Finally, the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation concludes. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

You also raise section 552.101 for the attorney fee bills. You argue that the bills contain attorney's mental processes that "are shielded by law because they constitute attorney work product." However, section 552.101 does not incorporate the attorney work product privilege.[2] Open Records Decision No. 575 at 2 (1990). Thus, you may not withhold the fee bills under section 552.101.

In light of our conclusion under section 552.103(a), we need not address the applicability of the other exceptions you raise. This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by

---

[1]If a governmental body submits to this office a "representative sample" of the requested records, we assume that the sample submitted is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988) (where requested documents are numerous and repetitive, governmental body should submit representative sample; but if each record contains substantially different information, all must be submitted). When a representative sample of the requested information is submitted to this office, the open records letter ruling does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

[2]Generally, attorney work product may be protected from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. Open Records Decision No. 575 at 2 (1990).

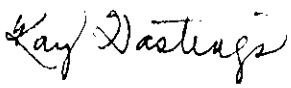
filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.–Austin 1992, no writ).

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Kay H. Hastings
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KHH/ljc

Ref: ID# 130672

Encl. Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Stephen P. Allison
Haynes and Boone
112 East Pecan Street, Suite 1600
San Antonio, Texas 78205-1540
(w/o enclosures)