



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

May 25, 2010

Mr. Tyler F. Wallach  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Fort Worth  
1000 Throckmorton Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2010-07579

Dear Mr. Wallach:

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# 380636 (Fort Worth PIR No. 2741-10).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for records and a DVD related to storm drain issues at a specified location. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides in pertinent part:

(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.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated

on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). The governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a). See ORD 551 at 4.

The question of whether litigation is reasonably anticipated must be determined on a case-by-case basis. See Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986). To establish litigation is reasonably anticipated, a governmental body must provide this office with “concrete evidence showing that the claim that litigation may ensue is more than mere conjecture.” *Id.* This office has concluded a governmental body’s receipt of a claim letter it represents to be in compliance with the notice requirements of the Texas Tort Claims Act (the “TTCA”), chapter 101 of the Civil Practice and Remedies Code, is sufficient to establish litigation is reasonably anticipated. If that representation is not made, the receipt of the claim letter is a factor we will consider in determining, from the totality of the circumstances presented, whether the governmental body has established litigation is reasonably anticipated. See Open Records Decision No. 638 at 4 (1996).

You assert the city reasonably anticipates litigation because the city received a claim letter from the requestor, prior to receiving the request for information, alleging that storm water flooded his place of business and caused damage to his property. You state that although the city has denied the requestor’s claim, the city expects that the requestor will file suit because the requestor has now complied with the TTCA by submitting his claim to the city. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city reasonably anticipated litigation when it received the request for information. You assert the submitted information relates to the litigation because it pertains to the city’s investigation of the requestor’s claims. We agree the submitted information relates to the anticipated litigation. Accordingly, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.103 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup>

However, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). Thus, information that has either been

---

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

obtained from or provided to the opposing party in the anticipated litigation is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a), and must be disclosed. Further, the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has been concluded or is no longer anticipated. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

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,



Kate Hartfield  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KH/dls

Ref: ID# 380636

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)