



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

December 9, 2011

Ms. Marcia Schreiber
Legal Assistant
City of Galveston
P.O. Box 779
Galveston, Texas 77553-0779

OR2011-18168

Dear Ms. Schreiber:

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# 438448 (City of Galveston ORR # 11-422).

The City of Galveston (the "city") received a request for the Galveston Recovery Housing Program application and any insurance documents or estimates pertaining to the remodel of a specified property. You state the city will redact social security numbers under section 552.147(b) of the Government Code.¹ You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides 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.

¹Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

...

(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). A 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 was 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). A governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a).

You inform us the requestor has been indefinitely suspended from the city's police department. You state the city is a civil service city under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. You also state the requestor has filed an appeal to his suspension pursuant to chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. We note municipal civil service appeals, such as the one at issue here, are governed by chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. See Local Gov't Code §§ 143.057, .127-.131. This office has determined such appeal proceedings constitute litigation for purposes of section 552.103. Cf. Open Records Decision No. 588 (1991). You state "the appeal of the indefinite suspension was in abeyance at the time the [present request] was filed and continues to remain open." Based on your representations and our review of the submitted documents, we find the city was a party to pending litigation on the date it received the request for information. Further, you state the submitted information relates to the issue in the pending appeal. Upon review, we find the submitted information is related to the pending litigation. Accordingly, we conclude section 552.103 of the Government Code is applicable to the submitted information.

We note once the information at issue has been obtained by all parties to the pending litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to the information. See Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). Accordingly, the city may only withhold the submitted information that the opposing party to the litigation has not seen or accessed under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We note that the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982). Therefore, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.103 of the Government Code.

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, 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Casterline', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarah Casterline
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SEC/ag

Ref: ID# 438448

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)