



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 31, 2015

Ms. Sandra Kim  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Austin  
Law Department  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767-8828

OR2015-06069

Dear Ms. Kim:

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# 558137 (ORR No. 01-00256).

The Austin Police Department (the "department") received a request for communications between a named department official and the City of Austin Law Department pertaining to a specified financial disclosure statement or a specified complaint and the named department official's web browsing history during a specified period of time. You state the department released some of the requested information. You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>1</sup>

You indicate, and we agree, the information you have marked is not responsive to the instant request for information. This ruling does not address the public availability of non-responsive information, and the department is not required to release non-responsive information in response to this request.

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<sup>1</sup>We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

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* Open Records Decision No. 676 at 6-7 (2002). 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. *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, and lawyer representatives. *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 information you have marked is protected by section 552.107(1) of the Government Code. You state the information at issue consists of communications involving department employees and attorneys for the City of Austin. You state the communications were made in confidence for the purpose of facilitating the rendition of professional legal services to the department 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 a portion of the information at issue. Thus, the department may withhold this information, which we have marked, under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code. However, because some of the requested information concerns a complaint pending with the Ethics Review Commission, the department has not shown one of the parties to the remaining communications has a privileged attorney-client relationship in the matter at issue. That is, the attorney is involved in some capacity other than that of

providing professional legal services to the client governmental body or its representative in this instance. Thus, we find the department has failed to demonstrate the remaining communications constitute privileged attorney-client communications for the purposes of section 552.107(1), and the department may not withhold any of the remaining information at issue on that basis. As you raise no further exceptions to disclosure, the remaining responsive information must be released.<sup>2</sup>

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,



Megan G. Holloway  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MGH/cbz

Ref: ID# 558137

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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<sup>2</sup>We note the requestor has a special right of access to some of the information being released in this instance. See Gov't Code § 552.023(a) (governmental body may not deny access to person to whom information relates, or that party's representative, solely on grounds that information is considered confidential by privacy principles).