



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 5, 2015

Ms. Tiffany Evans
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
Legal Department
P.O. Box 368
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2015-11069

Dear Ms. Evans:

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# 569438 (GC Nos. 22250, 22251, 22264).

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for "List of Eligibles" for the 2011 and 2013 Senior Communications Promotion Exam for the Houston Fire Department (the "department"), as well as confirmation or verification of promotion dates assigned to the requestor for specified department rank levels. The city claims the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note some of the submitted information is not responsive to the request for information because it was created after the city received the request. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and the city is not required to release this information in response to this request.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides in relevant part 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.

...

(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 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, orig. proceeding); *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 from disclosure under section 552.103(a).

This office has stated a pending complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (the "EEOC") indicates litigation is reasonably anticipated. Open Records Decision Nos. 386 at 2 (1983), 336 at 1 (1982). The city has submitted information to this office showing that, prior to the city's receipt of the request for information, the requestor filed a complaint against the city with the EEOC. Upon review, we find the city has demonstrated litigation was reasonably anticipated when it received the request for information. Our review of the information at issue also shows it is related to the anticipated litigation for purposes of section 552.103(a). Therefore, we agree the city may withhold the submitted responsive information under section 552.103.

However, we note once the information has been obtained by all parties to the anticipated litigation, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision No. 349 at 2 (1982). We also note the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends when the litigation has concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982) at 2; Open Records Decision Nos. 350 at 3 (1982), 349 at 2.

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, 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,


James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/cbz

Ref: ID# 569438

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)