



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 1, 2015

Mr. Bradley J. Domangue
Counsel for the Brazosport Independent School District
Thompson & Horton LLP
Phoenix Tower
3200 Southwest Freeway, Suite 2000
Houston, Texas 77027-7528

OR2015-20615

Dear Mr. Domangue:

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# 581684.

The Brazosport Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for all lobby contracts for any individual or group; total payments made to individuals or groups retained to lobby; and number of district employees, consultants, or independent contractors who spent at least twenty-five percent of work time on legislative matters and the total amount paid to them.¹ You state the district does not have information responsive to a majority of the request.² You claim the submitted information is excepted

¹We note the district sought and received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding when governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification of unclear or overbroad request for public information, ten-business-day period to request attorney general opinion is measured from date request is clarified or narrowed).

²The Act does not require a governmental body to release information that did not exist when a request for information was received or to prepare new information in response to a request. *See Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266, 267-68 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision Nos. 605 at 2 (1992), 452 at 3 (1986), 362 at 2 (1983).

from disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code.³ We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.107(1) of the Government Code protects information coming 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. ORD 676 at 6-7. First, a governmental body must demonstrate that the information constitutes or documents a communication. *Id.* at 7. Second, the communication must have been made “to facilitate the rendition of professional legal services” to the client governmental body. 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. *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 a 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. TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1)(A), (B), (C), (D), (E). 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.* 503(b)(1), meaning it was “not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those: (A) to whom disclosure is made to further the rendition of professional legal services to the client; or (B) reasonably necessary to transmit 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. *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 that 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

³Although you also raise section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with Texas Rule of Evidence 503 and Federal Rules of Evidence 501 and 502, this office has concluded section 552.101 does not encompass discovery privileges. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 676 at 1-2 (2002), 575 at 2 (1990). Further, in this instance, the information is properly addressed here under section 552.107, rather than rule 503. *See* ORD 676 at 3. Although it appears you also raise section 552.022 of the Government Code, that provision is not an exception to disclosure. Rather, section 552.022 enumerates categories of information that are not excepted from disclosure unless they are expressly confidential under the Act or other law. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.022. Additionally, although you raise sections 552.102, 552.103, and 552.136 of the Government Code, you make no arguments to support these exceptions. Therefore, we assume you have withdrawn your claim these sections apply to the submitted information. *See* Gov’t Code §§ 552.301, .302.

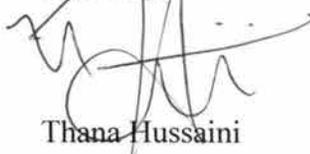
S.W.2d 920, 923 (Tex. 1996) (privilege extends to entire communication, including facts contained therein).

You state the submitted information is a communication from the district's attorneys to the district's superintendent. You state the communication was made to facilitate the rendition of professional legal services to the district, and the communication has not been shared with outside parties. Based on your representations and our review, we find the district has demonstrated the applicability of the attorney-client privilege to the submitted information. Therefore, the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.107 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.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,



Thana Hussaini
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

TSH/cbz

Ref: ID# 581684

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)