



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 13, 2015

Ms. Kristen N. Lee  
Assistant County Attorney  
County of Harris  
1019 Congress Street, 15th Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2015-21405

Dear Ms. Lee:

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# 582932 (C.A. File No. 15PIA0266).

The Harris County Flood Control District (the "district") received a request for information pertaining to Brays Bayou and/or Project Brays.<sup>1</sup> You state the district will release some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.105 and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.105 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information relating to "appraisals or purchase price of real or personal property for a public purpose prior to the formal award of contracts for the property." Gov't Code § 552.105(2). Section 552.105 is designed to protect a governmental body's planning and negotiating position with respect to particular transactions. Open Records Decision Nos. 564 at 2 (1990), 357 (1982), 310

---

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

(1982). Information excepted from disclosure under section 552.105 that pertains to such negotiations may be excepted from disclosure so long as the transaction relating to that information is not complete. *See* ORD 310. A governmental body may withhold information “which, if released, would impair or tend to impair [its] ‘planning and negotiating position in regard to particular transactions.’” ORD 357 at 3 (quoting Open Records Decision No. 222 (1979)). The question of whether specific information, if publicly released, would impair a governmental body’s planning and negotiating position with regard to particular transactions is a question of fact. Accordingly, this office will accept a governmental body’s good-faith determination in this regard, unless the contrary is clearly shown as a matter of law. *See* ORD 564.

You state the district has made a good-faith determination that a portion of the submitted information relates to the location of real property the district intends to “buyout.” You state the district has not finalized the process and terms regarding the property at issue and release of the submitted information would harm the district’s negotiating position with respect to the acquisition of this property. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the district may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.105 of the Government Code.

Section 552.111 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[a]n interagency or intraagency memorandum or letter that would not be available by law to a party in litigation with the agency[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.111. This exception encompasses the deliberative process privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 615 at 2 (1993). The purpose of section 552.111 is to protect advice, opinion, and recommendation in the decisional process and to encourage open and frank discussion in the deliberative process. *See Austin v. City of San Antonio*, 630 S.W.2d 391, 394 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 1982, writ ref’d n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 538 at 1-2 (1990).

In Open Records Decision No. 615, we determined section 552.111 excepts from disclosure only those internal communications that consist of advice, recommendations, opinions, and other material reflecting the policymaking processes of the governmental body. *See* ORD 615 at 5. A governmental body’s policymaking functions do not encompass routine internal administrative or personnel matters, and disclosure of information about such matters will not inhibit free discussion of policy issues among agency personnel. *Id.*; *see also City of Garland v. Dallas Morning News*, 22 S.W.3d 351, 364 (Tex. 2000) (section 552.111 not applicable to personnel-related communications that did not involve policymaking). A governmental body’s policymaking functions include administrative and personnel matters of broad scope that affect the governmental body’s policy mission. *See* Open Records Decision No. 631 at 3 (1995). Further, section 552.111 does not protect facts and written observations of facts and events severable from advice, opinions, and recommendations. *Arlington Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Tex. Attorney Gen.*, 37 S.W.3d 152, 157 (Tex. App.—Austin 2001, no pet.); *see* ORD 615 at 5. But, if factual information is so inextricably intertwined with material involving advice, opinion, or recommendation as to

make severance of the factual data impractical, section 552.111 protects the factual information. *See* Open Records Decision No. 313 at 3 (1982).

This office has also concluded section 552.111 exempts from disclosure a preliminary draft of a document intended for public release in its final form because the draft necessarily represents the drafter's advice, opinion, and recommendation with regard to the form and content of the final document. *See* Open Records Decision No. 559 at 2 (1990) (applying statutory predecessor). Section 552.111 protects factual information in the draft that also will be included in the final version of the document. *See id.* at 2-3. Thus, section 552.111 encompasses the entire contents of a preliminary draft of a policymaking document, including comments, underlining, deletions, and proofreading marks, that will be released to the public in its final form. *See id.* at 2.

The district states a portion of the submitted information consists of advice, opinions, and recommendations relating to the district's policymaking. The district also states the information at issue contains draft documents that will be released to the public in final form. Upon review, we find the district may withhold some of the information at issue, which we have marked, under section 552.111. However, we find some of the remaining information at issue consists of either general administrative information that does not relate to policymaking or information that is purely factual in nature. Thus, we find the district has failed to demonstrate how the remaining information at issue is excepted under section 552.111. Accordingly, the district may not withhold the remaining information at issue under section 552.111 of the Government Code.

We note some of the remaining information is subject to section 552.117 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup> Section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the home address and telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, and family member information of a current or former employee or official of a governmental body who requests this information be kept confidential under section 552.024 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(1). We note section 552.117 is also applicable to personal cellular telephone numbers, provided the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision No. 506 at 5-6 (1988) (section 552.117 not applicable to cellular telephone numbers paid for by governmental body and intended for official use). Whether a particular item of information is protected by section 552.117(a)(1) must be determined at the time of the governmental body's receipt of the request for the information. *See* Open Records Decision No. 530 at 5 (1989). Thus, information may be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) only on behalf of a current or former employee or official who made a request for confidentiality under section 552.024 prior to the date of the governmental body's receipt of the request for the information. Information may not be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) on behalf of a current or former

---

<sup>2</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

employee or official who did not timely request under section 552.024 the information be kept confidential. Therefore, if the employees at issue timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code and a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service, the district must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. Conversely, if the employees at issue did not timely request confidentiality under section 552.024 or a governmental body pays for the cellular telephone service, the district may not withhold the marked information under section 552.117(a)(1).

We note you have redacted personal e-mail addresses subject to section 552.137 of the Government Code pursuant to the previous determination in Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).<sup>3</sup> Section 552.137 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “an e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body” unless the member of the public consents to its release or the e-mail address is of a type specifically excluded by subsection (c). *See* Gov’t Code § 552.137(a)-(c). The e-mail addresses at issue are not excluded by subsection (c). Therefore, the district must withhold the personal e-mail addresses you redacted, and the additional e-mail addresses we marked, under section 552.137 of the Government Code, unless the owners affirmatively consent to their public disclosure.

In summary, the district may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.105 of the Government Code. The district may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.111 of the Government Code. To the extent the employees whose information is at issue timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code and a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service, the district must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. The district must withhold the personal e-mail addresses you redacted, and the additional e-mail addresses we marked, under section 552.137 of the Government Code, unless the owners affirmatively consent to their public disclosure. The district must release the remaining information.

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.

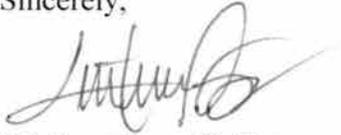
This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at <http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/>

---

<sup>3</sup>Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain categories of information, including e-mail addresses of members of the public under section 552.137, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

[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,



Cristian Rosas-Grillet  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CRG/cbz

Ref: ID# 582932

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)