



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 20, 2016

Ms. Amber K. King
General Counsel
Lake Travis Independent School District
3322 Ranch Road 620 South
Austin, Texas 78738

OR2016-01406

Dear Ms. King:

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# 594488 (102115-11D2-/DL 5353).

The Lake Travis Independent School District (the "district") received a request for all billing statements, invoices, and receipts for all legal expenses the district paid or received in September 2015. You state you will make some information available to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is privileged under Texas Rule of Evidence 503.¹ We have considered the raised argument and reviewed the submitted information.

We note, and you acknowledge, the submitted information consists of attorney fee bills that are subject to section 552.022(a)(16) of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a)(16) provides for required public disclosure of "information that is in a bill for attorney's fees and that is not privileged under the attorney-client privilege[.]" unless the information is confidential under the Act or other law. Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(16). However, we note the Texas Supreme Court has held the Texas Rules of Evidence are "other law" that make information expressly confidential for purposes of section 552.022. *In re City of Georgetown*, 53 S.W.3d 328, 336 (Tex. 2001). Thus, we will consider the district's assertion of the attorney-client privilege under Texas Rule of Evidence 503.

¹Although you raise section 552.022 of the Government Code, we note section 552.022 is not an exception to disclosure under the Act. Rather, section 552.022 enumerates categories of information that are not excepted from disclosure unless they are made confidential under the Act or other law. See Gov't Code § 552.022.

Texas Rule of Evidence 503 enacts the attorney-client privilege. Rule 503(b)(1) provides as follows:

A client has a privilege to refuse to disclose and to prevent any other person from disclosing confidential communications made to facilitate the rendition of professional legal services to the client:

(A) between the client or the client's representative and the client's lawyer or the lawyer's representative;

(B) between the client's lawyer and the lawyer's representative;

(C) by the client, the client's representative, the client's lawyer, or the lawyer's representative to a lawyer representing another party in a pending action or that lawyer's representative, if the communications concern a matter of common interest in the pending action;

(D) between the client's representatives or between the client and the client's representative; or

(E) among lawyers and their representatives representing the same client.

TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). A communication is "confidential" if it is 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).

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* ORD 676 at 6-7. Thus, in order to withhold attorney-client privileged information from disclosure under rule 503, a governmental body must: (1) show the document is a communication transmitted between privileged parties or reveals a confidential communication; (2) identify the parties involved in the communication; and (3) show the communication is confidential by explaining it was not intended to be disclosed to third persons and it was made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client. Upon a demonstration of all three factors, the information is privileged and confidential under rule 503, provided the client has not waived the privilege or the document does not fall within the purview of the exceptions to the privilege enumerated in rule 503(d). *See Pittsburgh Corning Corp. v. Caldwell*, 861 S.W.2d 423, 427 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1993, orig. proceeding).

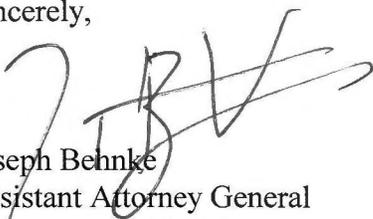
You assert the submitted fee bills include privileged attorney-client communications between or among the district's attorneys and district employees and officials. You state the communications at issue were made for the purpose of the rendition of legal services to the

district and were not intended to be disclosed to third parties. Based on your representations and our review of the information at issue, we find you have established some of the information you have marked constitutes attorney-client communications under rule 503. Thus, the district may withhold the information we have marked within the submitted attorney fee bills pursuant to rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence. However, we find you have not demonstrated the remaining information at issue documents an attorney-client communication for purposes of rule 503. We note an entry stating a memorandum, document, or an e-mail was prepared or drafted does not demonstrate the document was communicated to the client. Accordingly, the remaining information may not be withheld on that basis. As no other exceptions to disclosure have been raised, 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/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,



Joseph Behnke
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JB/som

Ref: ID# 594488

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)