



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 26, 2016

Ms. Captoria Brown  
Paralegal  
Office of the City Attorney  
City of Carrollton  
1945 East Jackson Road  
Carrollton, Texas 75006

OR2016-01945

Dear Ms. Brown:

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# 595631 (City ID: 6169).

The City of Carrollton (the "city") received a request for all records pertaining to the investigation and discipline of a named employee. The city claims the submitted 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 subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code, which provides in pertinent part:

(a) [T]he following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure unless made confidential under this chapter or other law:

(1) a completed report, audit, evaluation, or investigation made of, for, or by a governmental body, except as provided by Section 552.108[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(1). The submitted information includes a completed investigation subject to subsection 552.022(a)(1). The city must release the completed investigation pursuant to section 552.022(a)(1) unless it is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code or expressly made confidential under the Act or other law. *See id.* Although you raise section 552.103 of the Government Code for the entirety of the submitted information this section is a discretionary exception to disclosure and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469, 475-76 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (governmental body may waive Gov't Code § 552.103). Therefore, none of the information subject to section 552.022(a)(1), which we have marked, may be withheld under section 552.103. However, section 552.117 of the Government Code makes information confidential for purposes of section 552.022.<sup>1</sup> Thus, we will consider the applicability of this exception to the information subject to section 552.022. We will also address your argument under section 552.103 for the information not subject to section 552.022.

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)*. 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 employee or official who did not timely request under section 552.024 the information be kept confidential. Therefore, to the extent the employee whose information is at issue timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. Conversely, to the extent the employee whose information is at issue did not timely request confidentiality under section 552.024, the city may not withhold the information under section 552.117(a)(1).

Next, we turn to the information not subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. 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

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<sup>1</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987)*.

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). A governmental body claiming section 552.103 has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that 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, 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 under section 552.103(a).

This office has held that for the purposes of section 552.103, "litigation" includes "contested cases" conducted in a quasi-judicial forum. See Open Records Decision Nos. 474 (1987), 368 (1983), 336 (1982), 301 (1982). Likewise, "contested cases" conducted under the Texas Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 2001 of the Government Code, constitute "litigation" for purposes of section 552.103. See Open Records Decision Nos. 588 (1991) (concerning former State Board of Insurance proceeding), 301 (1982) (concerning hearing before Public Utilities Commission). Some of the factors this office considers in determining whether an administrative proceeding is conducted in a quasi-judicial forum are whether the administrative proceeding provides for discovery, evidence to be heard, factual questions to be resolved, the making of a record, and whether the proceeding is an adjudicative forum of first jurisdiction with appellate review of the resulting decision without a re-adjudication of fact questions. See Open Records Decision No. 588 (1991).

You inform us, prior to the city's receipt of the request, the fireman whose information is at issue filed an appeal challenging the city's actions regarding his suspension. You state the appeal is to be considered by a third-party hearing examiner, as authorized by chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. See Local Gov't Code §§ 143.057, .127-.131. You also indicate the arbitration is governed by the Labor Rules of the American Arbitration Association (the "AAA"). We note that under the AAA's Labor Rules, the parties may be represented by counsel, witnesses may be required to testify under oath, an arbitrator authorized by law to subpoena witnesses and documents may do so, and the arbitrator is the judge of the relevance and materiality of the evidence. Thus, we understand you to assert the arbitration constitutes litigation of a judicial or quasi-judicial nature for purposes of

section 552.103. *See generally* ORD 301 (discussing meaning of “litigation” under predecessor to section 552.103).

Based on your representations and our review of the submitted documents, we find the city was a party to pending litigation on the date it received the request for information. You assert the submitted information relates to the issue in the pending appeal. Upon review, we find the information at issue is related to the pending litigation. Accordingly, we conclude the city may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.103 of the Government Code.

However, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103 interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). Thus, information that has either been obtained from or provided to the opposing party in the pending litigation is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103, and it must be disclosed. We also note the applicability of section 552.103 ends once the litigation has been concluded.

In summary, in releasing the information subject to section 552.022(a)(1), to the extent the employee whose information is at issue timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. The city may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.103 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](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,



Katelyn Blackburn-Rader  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KB-R/bw

Ref: ID# 595631

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)