



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 22, 2016

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

OR2016-04158

Dear Ms. Folsom:

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# 599333 (Houston GC No. 22878).

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for a specified report. You claim the submitted information is privileged under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence. We have considered your claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note, and you acknowledge, the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a) provides, in relevant 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 consists of a completed investigation that is subject to section 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 is made confidential under the Act or other law. *See id.* You seek to withhold the submitted information under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence. The Texas Supreme Court has held the Texas Rules of Evidence are "other law" within the meaning of section 552.022. *See In re City of Georgetown*, 53 S.W.3d 328, 336 (Tex. 2001). Accordingly, we will address your claim of the attorney-client privilege under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence.

Texas Rule of Evidence 503(b)(1) provides:

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).

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. *See Open Records Decision*

No. 676 (2002). 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 state, pursuant to City of Houston Executive Order 1-39 (Revised), the Office of the Inspector General (the “OIG”) is a division of the city’s Office of the City Attorney and acts under that office’s supervision. You inform us the submitted information was communicated between employees of the OIG in their capacities as attorneys and attorney representatives and employees of the city in their capacities as clients and client representatives. You explain the information was created in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the city. You state the information at issue was not intended for release to third parties, and that you have maintained the confidentiality of the information at issue. Based on your representations and our review, we find you have demonstrated the applicability of the attorney-client privilege to the submitted information. *See Harlandale Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Cornyn*, 25 S.W.3d 328 (Tex. App.—Austin 2000, pet. denied) (concluding attorney’s entire investigative report was protected by attorney-client privilege where attorney was retained to conduct investigation in her capacity as attorney for purpose of providing legal services and advice). Accordingly, the city may withhold the submitted information under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence.

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# 599333

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)