



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 23, 2017

Mr. Mark J. Schnall
Counsel for the City of Selma
Langley & Banack, Inc.
745 East Mulberry, Suite 900
San Antonio, Texas 78212-3166

OR2017-11276

Dear Mr. Schnall:

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# 659073.

The City of Selma (the "city"), which you represent, received two requests from the same requestor for communications pertaining to the city and named individuals during a specified time period. You state you will redact dates of birth pursuant to Open Records Letter No. 2016-23715 (2016).¹ You argue some of the submitted information is not subject to the Act. You also claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103, 552.107, and 552.137 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted information, a portion of which is a representative sample.²

¹Open Records Letter No. 2016-23715 authorizes the City of Selma to withhold the dates of birth of public citizens under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy without requesting a decision from this office.

²We assume the representative sample of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Initially, the city argues some of the submitted information is not subject to the Act. The Act applies to “public information,” which is defined in section 552.002 of the Government Code as:

(a) . . . information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

(1) by a governmental body; or

(2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:

(A) owns the information;

(B) has a right of access to the information; or

(C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or

(3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer’s or employee’s official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Gov’t Code § 552.002(a). Thus, virtually all of the information in a governmental body’s physical possession constitutes public information and thus is subject to the Act. *Id.* § 552.002(a)(1); *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 549 at 4 (1990), 514 at 1-2 (1988). The Act also encompasses information that a governmental body does not physically possess. Information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained by a third party, including an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in his or her official capacity, may be subject to disclosure under the Act if a governmental body owns, has a right of access, or spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information. Gov’t Code § 552.002(a); *see* Open Records Decision No. 462 at 4 (1987). Information is “in connection with the transaction of official business” if the information is created by, transmitted to, received by, or maintained by a person or entity performing official business or a government function on behalf of a governmental body and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.002(a-1). Moreover, section 552.001 of the Act provides that it is the policy of this state that each person is entitled, unless otherwise expressly provided by law, at all times to complete information about the affairs of government and the official acts of public officials and employees. *See id.* § 552.001(a).

The city asserts Exhibit B-1 consists of communications that relate to personal matters of individuals, and argues these communications do not constitute public information since the nature of these communications does not pertain to the transaction of the city's official business. Based on the city's representations and our review, we find Exhibit B-1 does not constitute "information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business" by or for the city. *See id.* § 552.002. Therefore, we conclude Exhibit B-1 does not constitute public information for purposes of section 552.002 of the Government Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 635 at 7 (1995) (section 552.002 not applicable to personal information unrelated to official business and created or maintained by state employee involving *de minimis* use of state resources). Accordingly, the city is not required to release Exhibit B-1 in response to the request for information.³

Next, we note the submitted information contains a notice of a public meeting. Notices of a governmental body's public meetings are specifically made public under provisions of the Open Meetings Act, chapter 551 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code §§ 551.041 (governmental body shall give written notice of date, hour, place, and subject of each meeting), .043 (notice of meeting of governmental body must be posted in place readily accessible to general public for at least 72 hours before scheduled time of meeting). Although you seek to withhold this information under sections 552.103 and 552.107 of the Government Code, the exceptions to disclosure found in the Act generally do not apply to information other statutes make public. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 623 at 3 (1994), 525 at 3 (1989). Accordingly, the notice of a public meeting, which we have marked, must be released pursuant to chapter 551 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 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.

³As we are able to make this determination, we need not address the city's remaining argument for this information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show 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 for information 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 from disclosure under section 552.103(a).

The city states, and provides documentation showing, a lawsuit styled *Crain v. City of Selma*, Cause No. SA-16-CV-0408-XR, was pending against the city in the United States District Court of the Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division when it received the request for information. Therefore, we agree litigation was pending when the city received the request. We also find the city has established the remaining information is related to the pending litigation for purposes of section 552.103(a). Therefore, the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code.⁴

However, once the information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision No. 349 at 2 (1982). We also note the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends when the litigation has concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 at 2 (1982); Open Records Decision Nos. 350 at 3 (1982), 349 at 2.

In summary, Exhibit B-1 is not subject to the Act and the city is not required to release this information in response to the request for information. The city must release the notice of a public meeting we have marked pursuant to chapter 551 of the Government Code. The city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.103(a) 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

⁴As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Pounds', written in a cursive style.

Sidney M. Pounds
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SMP/nmd

Ref: ID# 659073

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)