



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 6, 2017

Mr. Zachary Brown  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Austin  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767-8828

OR2017-22866

Dear Mr. 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# 678919 (PIR# 35817).

The City of Austin (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to city expenditures related to specified lawsuits. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note some of the information you have submitted is not responsive to the request because it does not relate to the specified lawsuits. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and the city is not required to release such information in response to this request.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides 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.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). A 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 (1) litigation was 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). A governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a).

The city states, and provides documentation showing, a lawsuit styled *City of San Antonio v. State of Texas*, Civil Action No. 5:17-cv-00489 was pending in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas when it received the instant request for information. The city informs us prior to the receipt of the instant request, the city intervened in the suit. You state the responsive information is related to the pending lawsuit. Based on your representations, the submitted documentation, and our review of the responsive information, we find litigation was pending when the city received this request for information, and the responsive information is related to the pending litigation for the purposes of section 552.103. Therefore, the city may withhold the responsive information under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code.

Generally, however, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) 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 parties in the pending litigation is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a), and it must be disclosed. Further, the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has been concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Kunst". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Kunst  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

EK/tdw

Ref: ID# 678919

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)